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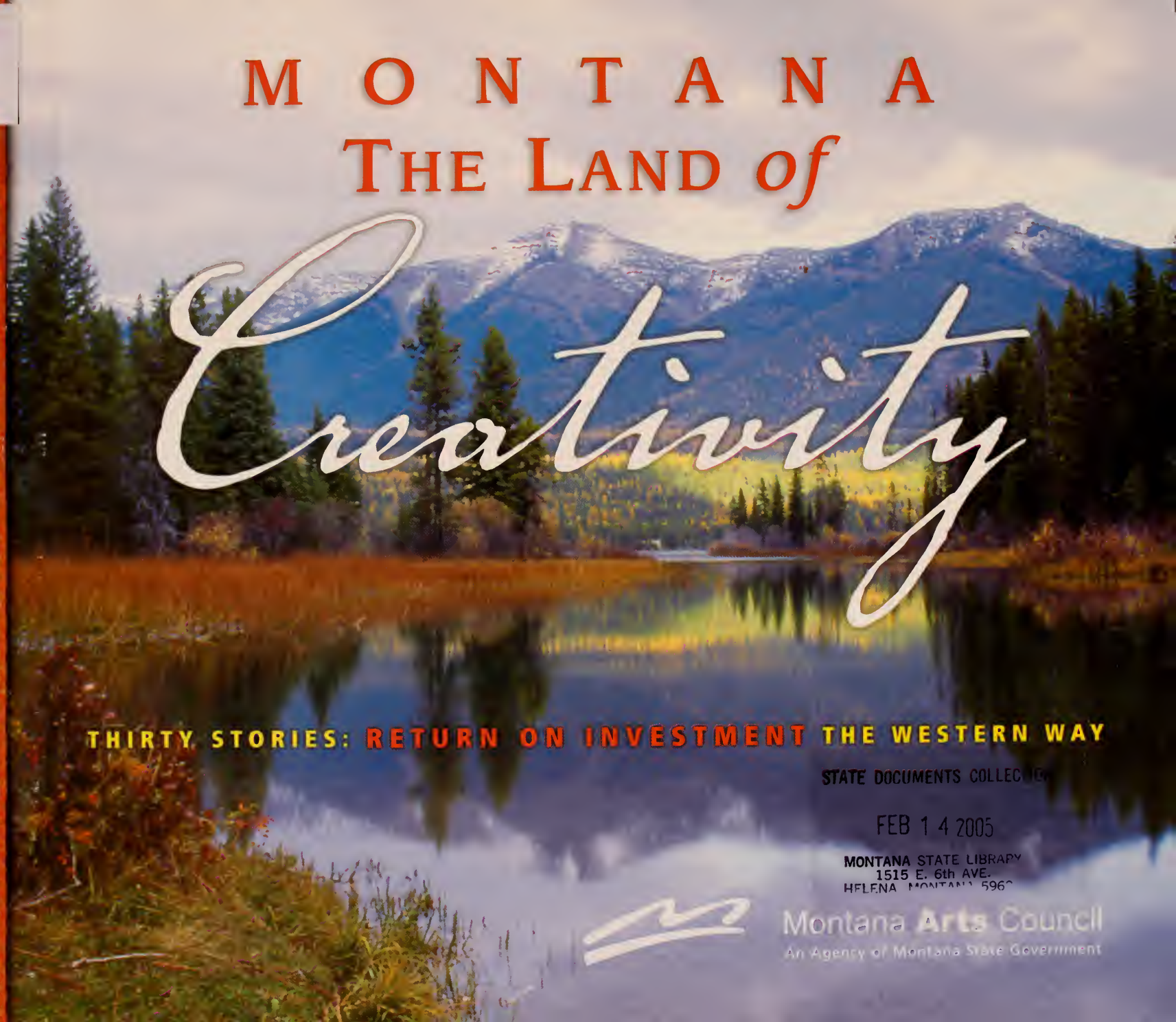
MONTANA
THE LAND of
Creativity



THIRTY STORIES: RETURN ON INVESTMENT THE WESTERN WAY

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Creativity.

The spark of imagination that ignites fresh and entrepreneurial thinking.
The source of inspiration that gives meaning to our lives through words and music, art and design.
The catalyst for new ways of thinking that helps solve the problems of today for a brighter tomorrow.

Welcome to Montana's future, the land of creativity brought to life through the arts.

This book is about "real Montanans" and their stories of how the arts spur the economy of the state and produce hard-working partners and community trailblazers. It puts a spotlight on the entrepreneurial spirit, great little towns made better through the arts, the benefits the public gains from creative minds and the lasting legacy the arts and creativity provide to us all as Montanans.

The Montana Arts Council is the state agency charged with promoting the arts, and it serves the Montana public with services and funding investments to help support arts education and arts-driven economic development throughout Montana.

The Montana Arts Council works hard to maximize its public value to Montanans. The agency defines public value as a principle or ideal, service or product intrinsically valuable or desirable to the citizens of Montana and worthy of state investment. It is important for Montanans to see the impact of how their tax dollars are spent, just like you'd look to see the return on your own investments.

There are facts. There are figures. But there has never been a collection of Montanans' own stories that illustrate the return on the investment in creative enterprise.

These are some of those stories.

The Montana Arts Council,
An Agency of Montana State Government

The Arts and the Humanities

The arts and the humanities often work best when they work together, and over the years the Montana Committee for the Humanities has had many opportunities to collaborate with the Montana Arts Council. Whenever people think about, write about, or discuss the arts, they are "doing" the humanities. Whenever the arts are seen in historical or critical perspective, *that* is the humanities. Indeed, the humanities are often called the Thinking Arts. It is our response – through thought and art – to our environment, our breathtaking surroundings, our diverse cultures and heritage, that makes up our unique Montana culture.

The Montana Committee for the Humanities is grateful to the Montana Arts Council for its early and ongoing support for many Montana Committee for the Humanities projects, such as the Montana Festival of the Book, our annual invitation to all Montanans to read the same book, "One Book Montana," our many reading and discussion programs held in communities across the state, our *Speakers Bureau,* grants and many other programs. And the Montana Committee for the Humanities commends the Montana Arts Council for its strong emphasis on preserving and disseminating traditional arts and culture in our state, for its aid to a myriad of non-profit groups of all shapes and sizes, and for its insistence that the arts are at the core of healthy and vibrant communities and economies.

In so many of our towns and counties, the public library, the small museum, the local chorale or symphony are the glue that makes a community. The stories in this collection are a testament to the health and creativity of our state. And they are a testament to the important work that the Montana Arts Council continues to undertake for all the citizens of Montana.

Montana Committee for the Humanities

An Affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities

MONTANA
THE LAND *of*
Creativity

THIRTY STORIES: RETURN ON INVESTMENT THE WESTERN WAY

This publication is produced and printed in Montana, by Montanans and for Montanans.

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Montana Committee for the Humanities
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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

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MONTANA **ARTS** COUNCIL

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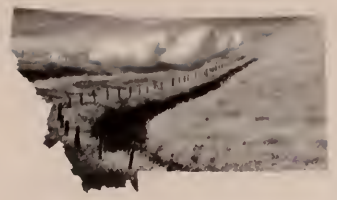


Spurring a Western Economy

Montana explores the economics of the arts

Ceramics, theater, writing, painting, music, sculpture... fulfilling pursuits to be sure, and for some lucky Montanans, their passions are also their jobs. But just what are those jobs worth? What are the arts worth to the economy of Montana? It's a tough number to pin down, but state officials hope to have a rough idea by the end of 2004.

The Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity has identified the arts, or more specifically, "creative enterprise," as a top priority for economic growth. A study, including a survey of 2,700 artists to be compiled by the Center for Applied Economic Research at Montana State University-Billings, will aim to define the role the arts play in the state's economy.

Dave Gibson, director of Governor Martz's GOEO, said the arts community has responded well to the notion of developing a "creative enterprise cluster," wherein several independent artists or businesses would work together at marketing and promoting the industry both within and especially outside Montana.

"I'm looking at this strictly economically," Gibson said. "I'm no expert on the arts, but I see tremendous growth potential here."

Geoff Sutton of Missoula is directing the creative enterprise cluster development program. "Not only are the arts an economic benefit, they are an amenity we can use to draw other businesses to Montana," Sutton said.

Sutton eventually envisions the development of a high-end art and craft market here, involving Montana artists and possibly those from other states. One of the first steps is determining the baseline economic impact of the arts, so subsequent studies of the efforts will have something to be measured against.

Gibson noted several areas in which the arts are a strength Montana can play to in developing its economy:

• The arts can affect tourism, drawing art-lovers to Montana to buy art — and to spend money at other businesses while they're here.

• The arts reach every corner of the state. "Some of our most rural towns that are really struggling have some creative people living in them," Gibson said. "It's the one cluster I'm working on that I don't think is geographically constrained."

• The arts are a value-added proposition, offering quality products that, unlike basic manufactured goods, can't be made overseas for less.

• Finally, the arts improve the quality of life of a community. "It's absolutely true that an arts component is a vital part of attracting talented people into a community," Gibson said.

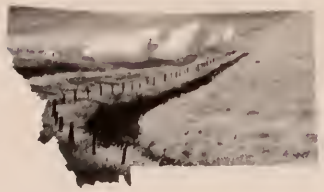
– John Harrington, Reprinted courtesy of Helena Independent Record

> "I'm looking at this strictly economically. I'm no expert on the arts, but I see tremendous growth potential here."
>
> *– Dave Gibson, Director of Martz's Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity*

Return on Investment

Montana has a national reputation for the high quality and number of artists and arts-related businesses here. They are writers, musicians, actors, dancers, visual artists, artisans, traditional artists or galleries, studios and other arts-related private-sector and nonprofit businesses.

There is every reason to look forward to a day when Montana could be known here and around the world as, "the land of creativity." When creativity thrives in every aspect of life – business, tourism, education, and working out solutions to the tough problems that face the state. When that creativity not only results in a better quality of life for all Montanans, but also a more vibrant and diversified economy.



Spurring a Western Economy

Nonprofit arts play vital role in Montana's economy

In 2003, a landmark study sponsored by the Montana Arts Council and conducted by the Bozeman research firm ArtsMarket, Inc., surveyed Montana nonprofit arts organizations to assess how arts and cultural programs contribute to the state economy.

Financial data collected on 137 Montana nonprofit arts institutions was used to calculate impacts. This data was provided by the Internal Revenue Service and supported by surveys conducted in the fall of 2002 by ArtsMarket, Inc.

Executive summary and key findings

Like a cool summer breeze or the electricity that gives light to our homes, the arts are often taken for granted until their absence is felt. In as much as we all know it is easier to fill a pond before it is empty, it makes sense that we need to keep Montana's arts afloat and prevent their dissolution, particularly during questionable economic times.

Consider how much the arts add to the quality of life we enjoy, the education our children receive and the communities we share. The arts positively affect and unite Montanans in hundreds of ways. The arts also flow into our businesses, our jobs and our bank accounts in just as many ways. This research has been conducted to illustrate just a few of the ways the arts affect our economy through arts organization and audience spending. Here are a few key findings.

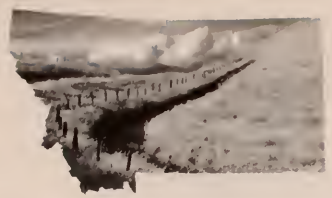
The total economic impact of 137 Montana nonprofit arts institutions was $85 million in FY2002

The multiple impacts of the arts are a critical component of Montana's economy. The arts affect Montanans in so many ways that it is difficult to plumb the full depth of their impact. Even when only evaluating the impact Montana's individual nonprofit arts organizations and their attending audiences have on the economy, the findings are robust. This study found that Montana's arts organizations spent $22.2 million on programming and operations during the 2001-2002 fiscal year. The total economic impact of the 137 organizations and their attending audience was $85.1 million, generating the following:

- 1,949 full-time jobs paying an average of $18,275 per job;
- $35.8 million in payroll income;
- $13.5 million in tax revenues with $4 million staying local; and
- 260,000 out-of-state visitors as paying audience members.

Total Economic Impact for Individual Cities in FY2002

BILLINGS	$15.83 million dollar impact
BOZEMAN	$11.25
BUTTE	$2.65
GREAT FALLS	$11.99
HELENA	$15.67
KALISPELL – WHITEFISH	$2.05
MISSOULA	$15.07
REST OF MONTANA	$10.60
ALL OF MONTANA	$85.1 million dollar impact



Spurring a Western Economy

Montana's arts organizations invest in the Montana community

In FY2002, local arts organizations allowed only 12 percent of their annual operating budgets to go outside of the state's economy, yet attracted over 17 percent of their audience from out of state.

• 88 percent of dollars spent by arts organizations are spent locally.

• One-sixth of the Montana nonprofit arts audience travels from out of state.

For a complete copy of "The Role of Nonprofit Arts in Montana's Economy" please e-mail mac@mt.gov

The arts draw upon a generosity in our communities that rarely exists in any other industry

The arts potentially provide the largest "under the radar" workforce in the state with each of the 6,600 volunteers giving an average of 30 hours a year.

• 6,600 volunteers contributed 200,000 hours in their communities through arts activities. This is the equivalent of donating 200 full-time employees or donating $1.8 million in payroll.

Montana's arts organizations are a great investment for the state

Close to one-third of the tax revenue stimulated by arts organization and audience expenditures stays in Montana and is used by local and state government agencies.

• $100,000 in tax revenue is generated by an average Montana arts organization for the federal government, the State of Montana and the local municipality or county.

• $13.5 million in tax revenue is generated by Montana's nonprofit arts, with $4 million in tax revenue staying in Montana and $9.5 million in tax revenue going to the U.S. government.

An average nonprofit arts organization is exceptionally efficient and effective

The typical arts organization serves thousands of people with an average operating budget of $160,000. In order to do this, the Montana Arts Council provides seed money towards the arts activities of 154 organizations. In 2002 alone, 331 investments were made that affected thousands.

• More than 10,000 people were directly served by the average Montana nonprofit arts organization in the last year.

• 1,500,000 audience members were patrons of 137 Montana arts organizations.

• 123,000 children were served by Montana Arts Council grant recipients in 2002.

Montana's nonprofit arts industry is a significant component of the state's economy

Close to one-third of the tax revenue stimulated by arts organization and audience expenditures stays in Montana and is used by local and state government agencies.

• Montana's arts have a greater employment impact than one-quarter of the state's top 100 industries.

• 1,959 full-time jobs are generated by the impact of 137 arts organizations, with 990 jobs generated by arts organization operations and 969 jobs generated by audiences attending arts events.

Finally, the 2000 U.S. Census shows that one out of every 78 people in Montana's labor market is a working artist.

Spurring a Western Economy

Artists are key to rural economic development

Artists help define a community's identity. They can also play a key role in rural economic development, according to Big Timber resident Joe Hansen.

A long-time rancher on the Boulder River south of Big Timber, Hansen is a strong supporter of the arts as well as an advocate for aggressive economic development in his community.

Big Timber's efforts to revitalize the economy began when community members combined technologies, energy, creativity and management skills to support local arts-based and other businesses from the ground-up, explains Hansen.

He cites three properties on Big Timber's Main Street that house successful arts-related businesses, including a primitive furniture store that would otherwise be empty if not for community support to integrate local arts and artists into the heart of the economic development effort.

"The artistic community is established and growing, with more than 30 artists currently living here," he notes. "People who make their living as artists serve on boards, work in the schools, raise their kids and contribute to the community. It makes sense to make them an integral part of our economic development activities."

"Free Spirit" by Dave Hodges

> "People who make their living as artists serve on boards, work in the schools, raise their kids and contribute to the community. It makes sense to make them an integral part of our economic development activities."
>
> – *Joe Hansen, Big Timber rancher*

Partnering with the cultural sector to revitalize rural communities is a growing economic development trend in Montana and other states across the country. According to Hansen, it's an approach that pays off. "It's about preserving a part of Montana's cultural heritage while, at the same time, keeping Big Timber vital," he says.

Big Timber has integrated the arts in a strategy that blends a passion to succeed with the creative skills necessary to make a dream come true, Hansen says.

"We would be poorer both economically and culturally without the arts," he adds. "It is the land, its people, and the arts that draw us here. Economic viability will keep us here."

– *Kathleen Benoit*
for the Montana Arts Council

Substantial Economic Potential

Nationally, there is a movement among local and state governments, as well as economic developers, to place greater importance on the economic value of creative enterprises, such as artists and arts businesses, because of their strong growth potential.

Montana Arts Council's Connection

The State of Montana's Office of Economic Opportunity made economic development through Creative Enterprise Clusters one of its top strategies in 2003-2004, in partnership with the Montana Arts Council. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, one in every 78 people in Montana's labor force is a working artist, residing in rural towns as well as cities.

Spurring a Western Economy

Visitors flock to International Choral Festival

Artistic exchange, global understanding, friendship and goodwill through choral music. Seems like an ambitious mission – especially given the world's current instability – but since 1987, the International Choral Festival in Missoula has accomplished just that – and much more.

A choir at the International Choral Festival

The Missoula Mendelssohn Club launched the festival 17 years ago after attending a similar affair in Nancy, France.

Fourteen choirs arrived from around the globe for the inaugural event. It was an instant success and has continued every three years since. The seventh festival is slated for July 12-16, 2006.

Typically, 14-21 choirs participate from the United States, Canada and around the world, for a total influx of nearly 800 performers and support staff.

In addition, fans of choral music flock to the Garden City. "People tell us all the time that they arrange vacations and family visits around that date," says Park.

An estimated 20,000 people attended the 2003 festival, even though temperatures reached 110 degrees. Attendance has been as high as 35,000, with 30,000 as the norm.

An audience of 5,000-7,000 people usually attends the Massed Choir Finale, when more than 700 singers take turns singing, then pool their voices for the final piece.

So far, a total of 98 choirs have attended the festival from 36 countries. In 2003, for the first time, the festival received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and funding from the Montana Arts Council to send choirs to several outlying communities. "It was sure nice to spread the culture out over the state," says Park.

More than half of the festival's $250,000 budget comes from individual and corporate donations. The host city, says Park, has been "incredibly generous."

Missoula's own cultural diversity has also helped surmount language barriers. "We've been tremendously lucky to find students, professors or local residents who speak the languages of our visitors – we've never been entirely out of luck," Park says.

And, even if words falter, there's always song. "It doesn't matter if you can speak each other's language, you can always sing together," says Park, who has performed in almost every festival. "That's why I'm involved – it just grabs you by the heart."

– Kristi Niemeyer

> "People tell us all the time that they arrange vacations and family visits around the festival date."
>
> *– Peter Park, Coordinator, International Choral Festival*

Return on Investment

This festival is frequently listed among the top 100 tourist bus-trip destinations when it is held every three years, attracting a national audience of choral music-lovers. It is cultural tourism at its finest.

The Montana Arts Council conducted a study in 2003 of one thousand members of the general public in Montana about their attitudes on arts participation. The study found that 75% of Montanans participate in the arts, and one of the chief motivators is the chance to see something special with family and friends. The International Choral Festival certainly fits this bill!

Spurring a Western Economy

Fort Peck Theatre: A jewel of the plains

When the Fort Peck Theatre opened in 1934, movies ran 24 hours a day, seven days a week to accommodate the flood of workers who were constructing mighty Fort Peck Dam.

Seventy years later, the lovingly restored chalet-style building attracts an audience from three states and Canada for its summer menu of live theatre.

When the theatre first opened, 50,000 people lived nearby; now, the town of Fort Peck is home to about 200 year-around residents. "They open their arms up to us every season," says Kari Lee Knierim, president of the Fort Peck Fine Arts Council and a member of the Montana Arts Council. "They love to have us there."

Artistic director Christopher Kristant recruits actors from Montana and beyond, mixing professional performers with up-and-coming college and local talent. Actors live in town during the summer, in a house recently purchased by the council, and share their talents with kids from around the region during a two-week performing arts camp.

Fort Peck Theatre

The building's charm, coupled with a commitment to quality theatre, keeps people coming back year after year. According to Knierim, it's a recipe that works, both economically and artistically.

"Our mission is to offer great performing arts and balance the budget," says Knierim. To that end, volunteers take tickets, sell concessions, serve as ushers and staff the gift shop. "People have been coming since the seventies to volunteer," says Knierim. "We couldn't do it without them."

In 2003, the council raised $65,000 in just four months to install a new sound system – a much-needed improvement, since the stage was originally designed for movies instead of live productions.

The council and actors try to replenish that wellspring of community support with a commitment to buy locally. "Most of the dollars generated from the theatre are spent around here," says Knierim. "That's important to us."

On the eastern Montana plains, where it's a long way to anywhere, a touch of culture is welcomed with open arms. "People in remote places appreciate performing arts," says Knierim. "They love this theatre so much, they keep coming back."

– Kristi Niemeyer

> "Most of the dollars generated from the theatre are spent around here – that's important to us."
>
> *– Kari Lee Knierim, President, Fort Peck Fine Arts Council*

Montana Arts Council's Investment

The Montana Arts Council has invested public dollars in many Fort Peck Fine Arts Council projects throughout the years to provide seed funding for the Fort Peck Summer Theatre and winter events.

Return on Investment

The Fort Peck Summer Theatre draws audiences from all over eastern Montana, Canada and North Dakota. In fact, the theatre counts license plates on cars during performances, and they have tracked cars from every state in the nation. Local businesses cite the summer theatre as the reason they are able to stay in business because its strong tourism draw fills hotel beds and increases restaurant sales.

Spurring a Western Economy

Storytelling Roundup boosts local economy

Each year, Cut Bank lassoes a herd of performers for its annual Montana Storytelling Roundup, held the end of April.

Almost every school in Glacier County participates, with performers visiting schools in Cut Bank, Babb, Browning and East Glacier, plus five local Hutterite colonies, during the week prior to the roundup. Altogether, the program typically reaches 3,500 adults and children.

From his experience with the roundup, Paul Tuss, executive director of Bear Paw Development Corporation in Havre, knows that the arts can make an important economic contribution to Montana communities. He offered the following written comments during the 2003 legislative session:

Chainsaw sculptors and the Montana Storytelling Bear
(Photo courtesy of *Western Breeze*)

"While there are many obvious reasons why the arts are important to Montana as a cultural resource, it is equally important to focus on the important role the arts community has in making our state a more attractive place to conduct business.

"Clearly, Montana has much to offer America's business community in terms of being a quality place to live, work and raise a family. A key ingredient in this quality-of-life equation is Montana's flourishing arts community.

"I have seen first-hand the important economic contribution an arts organization can make in a community. Prior to my time here at Bear Paw Development Corporation, I served as executive director of Glacier County's economic development organization. I was involved heavily for a number of years in the local activities that led each spring to the annual Montana Storytelling Roundup.

"For the better part of a week, entertainers from throughout the country engaged local residents and out-of-area visitors in a program of storytelling that is arguably unequaled in its quality or attendance anywhere in our state.

"This was all possible through a financial contribution of approximately $5,000 per year from the State of Montana. While it was a small part of a larger budget, it provided the necessary seed money to 'get the ball rolling.'

"The immense amount of community pride in this event, along with the real economic benefits to the community of Cut Bank by out-of-area visitors, was well worth the state's financial contribution."

> "A key ingredient in the quality-of-life equation is Montana's flourishing arts community."
> *– Paul Tuss, Executive Director, Bear Paw Development*

Montana Arts Council's Investment

The Montana Arts Council provides support to the roundup by grant investments to help support its arts education activities. The Montana Cultural Trust also provides support.

Return on Investment

Sell-out crowds attend the evening events, with audiences ranging from small children to weather-faced farmers with their baseball caps, totaling 3,500 throughout the weekend. Arts programming draws people to a town, boosting local business and helping make Montana a more attractive place to conduct business, according to Paul Tuss, executive director of Bear Paw Development.

Entrepreneurial Spirit

Hardship, vanishing lifestyle inspire songwriter

First they took the cows, then the machinery.

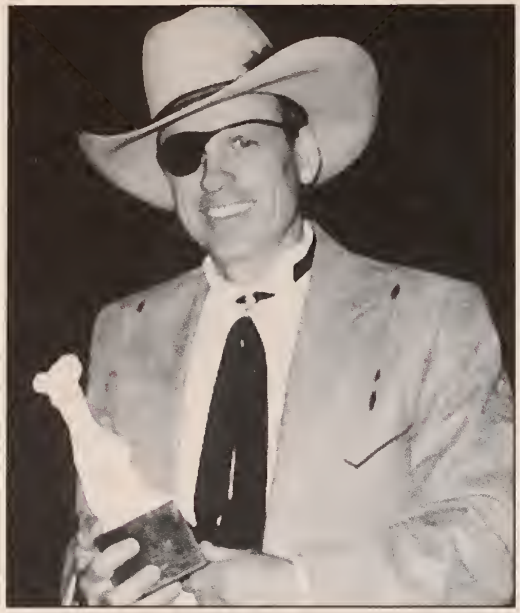
Finally, the debt collector kicked Ken and Dawn Overcast out of their brick ranch house in Chinook.

As the couple left that October day, they wrote a blessing and hung it on a kitchen wall, in the spot where their clock once ticked, never expecting to return. "Lord, we ask your blessing on this dear old home. We ask that you will bless those who live here as you have blessed us," it began.

Sixteen years later, the couple runs a thriving recording business from an upstairs bedroom in that same house. Outside, cattle low in the corrals.

Working on his eighth CD, Ken, 56, sometimes draws on those years, at the worst of the '80s farm crisis, for inspiration.

"The creativity has only come through the hard times," said Overcast, whose sixth album, *Montana Cowboy,* was named the "Best Cowboy Music CD" in *True West Magazine*'s second annual "Best of the West" awards in September 2003. In 2000, Overcast won the coveted "Will Rogers Yodeler of the Year" award from the Academy of Western Artists.



Ken Overcast

Overcast's book of cowboy poetry, *Yesterday's Yarns,* is selling nationwide and his syndicated radio program, "The Cowboy Show," is on 30 stations, including a number on the East Coast.

The couple's thriving recording company, Bear Valley Records, has carried the couple through at least four years of drought...

The couple's thriving recording company, Bear Valley Records, has carried the couple through at least four years of drought on the Hi-Line and the latest downturn in the farm and ranch economy.

"We'd have never made it without this career," Dawn says.

But both say their music and publishing business is less a career than a cause. "Our western lifestyle is what our passion is about," Dawn says.

The goal is "to try to raise the awareness of the vanishing lifestyle and the people who are sacrificing to maintain it," Ken said.

Although Overcast records his albums in Nashville and has performed at the prestigious Bluebird Cafe, he hasn't pursued a major record label. The couple likes to do things the rancher way – independently.

– Karen Ogden

Reprinted with permission from the Great Falls Tribune, Oct. 4, 2003

Montana Arts Council's Connection

Ken Overcast is but one of Montana's rural artists whose art is helping his family stay on the ranch or the farm, or helping them maintain their beloved rural lifestyle when jobs are scarce and the economy is rough.

The Montana Arts Council's partnership to build Creative Enterprise Cluster economic development strategies for the state has special significance for rural Montana. Distribution networks for art – whether it be music, craft, books or other arts – can be strengthened and individual revenues enhanced ... to help "Home on the Range" remain a reality, not just a song.

Entrepreneurial Spirit

Chainsaw sculptor Dave Clarke carves out career

With his Homelite chainsaw in hand, Tobacco Valley resident Dave Clarke hewed a profession out of a hobby. His chainsaw sculptures – often of charming bruins in humanlike poses – have been sold throughout the United States. His carving skills have taken Clarke as far afield as China, Taiwan and Japan and earned him a segment on ABC's Good Morning America.

The artist, who displays his work at his Chips 'n Critters gift shop in Eureka, says the path to success wasn't always easy. When he gave up his job as a contractor 20 years ago and began carving full time, "bankers quit me and people thought I was nuts," he says. "But I was determined to make it work – I believed in it."

He adds, however, that commercial success requires more than artistic talent. The four ingredients, in his book, are marketing, mindset, ingenuity and determination.

Although Clarke had sketched and whittled as a child growing up in western Montana, "I never considered myself an artist."

Dave Clarke

One year, while cutting Christmas trees in Montana for the California market, he used his saw to carve a "crazy-looking" tiki form out of a stump for his stepfather. A friend ordered one and offered him $150 – Clarke charged him $15.

Thirteen years and a few hundred sculptures later, he made the leap from contractor to full-time chainsaw artist. That was 20 years ago. "I hung up my hammer and never looked back."

He credits good marketing as "such an incredible key" to the success of his business. And marketing efforts made 20 years ago are still paying dividends.

> "The four ingredients to commercial success are marketing, mindset, ingenuity and determination."
>
> – *Chainsaw sculptor Dave Clarke*

In 1998, he landed a million-dollar contract with the wholesale giant Costco, which planned to sell his bears from San Diego to Alaska. Clarke opened a factory in Eureka, hired 15 employees and shipped pallet-loads of bears.

Six months later, he closed the factory doors. "Unfortunately, my bat just wasn't big enough," Clarke says. He adds that his health and quality of life took a beating from the experience, so he decided to rein his business back to a sustainable size.

And while the bears remain customer favorites, he occasionally carves less commercial work. "If I don't break loose and carve something I want to do once in awhile, I feel like there's an anchor on me," he says. "I just get in there and dig an image out of a piece of wood."

– *Kristi Niemeyer*

Montana Arts Council's Connection

One in every 78 people in Montana's labor market is a working artist, according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

Montana officially began to place a priority on the artists' role in economic development in 2002, when the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity made Creative Enterprise Cluster economic development a top priority. The Montana Arts Council is partnering in these efforts to help promote Montana artists, expand their markets, and provide technical assistance to help them grow their arts businesses.

ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

Rancher turns to saddle-making for a living

Bill Allison, a lifelong rancher and leathercrafter, says he would still be ranching if it weren't for the drought that's gripped eastern Montana. Instead, he and his wife and daughter now run a saddle shop in Roundup and ship their handcrafted wares throughout the United States and as far afield as Australia. Allison builds saddles, while his wife creates chaps and their daughter makes bridles, breast collars and other tack.

In a letter to the Montana Arts Council, he describes how he ended up making saddles for a living:

"When I was younger, I would have a new saddle every six months, never being satisfied until I built 64 saddles. I finally had one I would not sell and I have been riding it for 12 years.

"I have made a lot of saddles for neighboring ranchers. There is not a better feeling than to please a cowboy at his work. By this time, I know that to fit the saddle tree to the horse is as important as fitting the cowboy to the saddle.

"Ranching can be so stressful, what with hard winters, drought and grasshoppers. To be able to go out to the saddle shop gave me such peace of mind. The extra income helped fill the gap, too.

Bill Allison

"There are a lot of reasons saddles are being made, from ranch use to rodeo and pleasure. Some folks have them carved up just to set in the house and look at.

"I have learned to carve and fit leather and make most any leather project. I can do most pictures in leather and Will James is my favorite. He has the most action in his animals.

"I had the opportunity to help a big ranch ship around 5,000 head of cattle last fall … One of the hands was riding a saddle with a warped tree, which sits on a horse uneven, causing large sores on the horse's back … I volunteered to build him a saddle that he can pay for as he can afford it. This particular hand has had a smile on his face ever since – not to mention the horse that he was riding."

> "There is not a better feeling than to please a cowboy at his work."
>
> *– Saddlemaker Bill Allison*

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL'S CONNECTION TO PROUD MONTANA TRADITIONS

The Montana Arts Council awarded Bill Allison two Master/Apprentice awards to teach his fine saddlemaking techniques. Montana's traditional arts, such as saddle-making, silver- and black-smithing, beading, quillwork and Norwegian hardanger, are an important focus at the Montana Arts Council. The agency supports these arts through its Folklife program, the oldest such program in the nation. These skills, which are passed on through one-on-one training, can become lost arts if not promoted. The Montana Arts Council has a Traditional Arts Master/Apprentice program to help ensure that these traditions remain and thrive in Montana. The state's Cultural Trust program also places a high priority on traditional arts programs and projects.

ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

Welded horsemen are "guardians of the plains"

Enter the Blackfeet Reservation from any direction – north, south, east and west – and you'll be greeted by a pair of life-size horsemen, crafted by St. Ignatius artist Jay Laber.

The sculptures, formed from rusted car bodies, hubcaps and barbed wire, were commissioned by the Blackfeet Tribe. The pairs of chiefs on horseback, perched atop stone mounds, welcome travelers at Cut Bank, Babb, East Glacier and Badger Creek.

Laber, an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe, was tapped for the job after tribal members saw a huge buffalo he had forged out of old car parts for the American Indian Consortium's art show, held several years years ago in Billings.

Welded horseman by Jay Laber

"They saw the buffalo and asked me if I could use the old cars on the reservation to represent the old-time chiefs in their war bonnets," says Laber. The project marked the reservation's first public art project and was funded in part by a grant from the Montana Arts Council and economic development sources on the reservation.

The rusted "prairie cars" that Laber salvaged for his sculptures were buried in a gulch near Browning where they had been submerged during heavy flooding on the reservation several decades ago. In addition to car parts, he accompanied reservation children on foraging missions to retrieve other recycled metal for his work. "'Anything you can find,' I said, 'just throw it in the truck.'"

> "There's always a crowd of cars in front of the statues, taking photos and commenting on how they came to be."
> – *Jackie Parsons, Retired Executive Director, Northern Plains Indian Crafts*

According to Jackie Parsons, retired executive director for Northern Plains Indian Crafts in Browning, the sculptures are a hit with reservation residents and visitors alike. "Everybody here is really proud of them. There's always a crowd of cars in front of the statues, taking photos and commenting on how they came to be."

She considers Laber "a master artist because of what he's capable of doing with junk. Everything is proportioned correctly. He was able to capture the grace of the horse, the very stoic look of the warriors."

"They look like guardians of the plains."

– *Kristi Niemeyer*

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL'S INVESTMENT

The Montana Arts Council invested public dollars through its Arts Are Central to Our Communities program in the Blackfeet Economic Development office, which commissioned Jay Laber to create the sculptures.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The sculptures are a landmark. The project provides Mr. Laber with great visibility as a successful artist and sculptor. Public dollars were matched and community pride skyrocketed when sculptures were purchased for all four of the Blackfeet Reservation's entrances.

Hard-Working Partners

Chamber of commerce gallery showcases local art

The Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce has transformed an adjacent building into a gallery that reflects the myriad talents of area artists.

The 1,000-square-foot Showcase of the Bitterroot displays works by 35-40 artists from throughout the valley. Carved bears and antler chandeliers share space with jewelry, quilts, paintings and photographs.

"It's soup to nuts," says chamber president Cindy Mikesell. "We try to appeal to anyone who walks through the door."

And potentially, a throng of visitors could walk through the door. During the summer, up to 10,000 people stop by the chamber – an average of 70 visitors daily. The project was the brainchild of Mikesell, proprietor of Mikesell's Jewelry, and her cohorts on the long-term planning committee. "We have a beautiful town, and a couple of galleries and furniture stores do display artwork," she says. "But we wanted to do something in the valley for artists who don't have a storefront."

Showcase of the Bitterroot in Hamilton

The chamber represents 570 businesses in an area that stretches from Lolo to the north and the Idaho border to the south. It's brimming with artists of all stripes. "We decided they would not have to be members of the chamber of commerce – it would be open to locals, no strings attached," Mikesell says.

Artists supply business cards and biographical information, which is displayed in plexiglass stands, and three-to-four pieces representative of their work.

The chamber's office manager, Pat Easely, notes that artists have been very enthusiastic about the project.

With business cards on hand, "we can encourage visitors to go see what else the artists have to offer," she says. "A lot of these are home studios and mom-and-pop operations. It's a good way to give them exposure – and get people who are traveling through to stop and visit."

Mikesell agrees. By placing a gallery next to the chamber office, "visitors who walk through the doors will be well versed in the Bitterroot Valley and its artists as well – it's the best of both worlds."

– Kristi Niemeyer

> "Visitors who walk through the doors will be well versed in the Bitterroot Valley and its artists as well – it's the best of both worlds."
>
> *– Cindy Mikesell, President, Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce*

Mutual Local Investments with Mutual Rewards

The chamber provides a quality venue for, and seeks out, local artists, who attract greater visitation to the chamber. Artists displayed at the chamber sell work and the chamber reinforces the cultural life of the area to visitors and the business community. A vibrant arts community is important to local quality of life, tourism, new business recruitment and residential relocation.

Montana Arts Council's Connection

The Montana Arts Council participates in, and promotes, statewide chamber of commerce dialogue encouraging arts-driven partnerships with business communities.

Hard-Working Partners

Branding Bozeman as a cultural tourism center

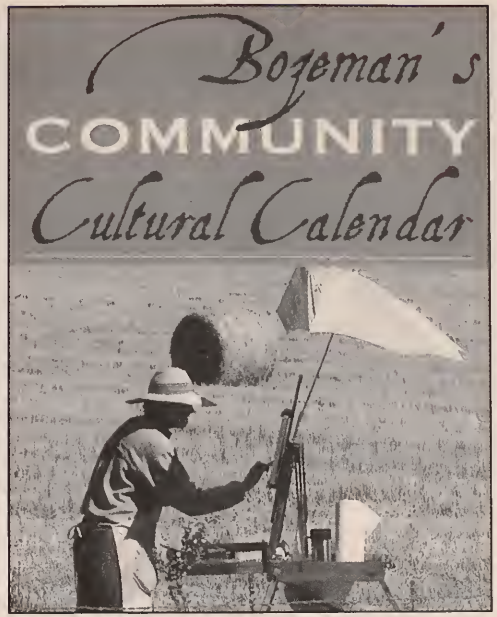
Businesses and arts organizations in the Bozeman area began the new century with a renewed commitment to cultural growth in their community.

The Bozeman Community Cultural Council (BCCC) was established in 2000, after a community meeting attracted representatives of more than 50 cultural organizations. Participants agreed that although Bozeman boasts a wealth of arts and cultural assets, the community lacks the infrastructure to market its cultural amenities.

The council was established to answer those needs. "Our goal was to develop and promote cultural programs so that Bozeman could be seen as a place you come to, not a place you pass through," says BCCC member Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer.

As one of the fastest growing areas in Montana, Bozeman "finds itself at a pivotal moment in deciding how we want to brand ourselves as a community," says Sachatello-Sawyer. "Clearly, we want to expand the reach of cultural programs to residents and visitors alike."

Bozeman and nearby Livingston offer an uncommonly rich cultural landscape, with myriad art galleries and museums, a dozen acting companies (including a professional Shakespeare troupe), dance companies, an opera company, a symphony orchestra and a large summer arts festival.



Bozeman Community Cultural Council calendar

> Cultural tourists are visitors who attend arts and cultural events, visit historical sites, and purchase locally made arts and crafts.

Other communities in the West, such as Jackson, WY, and Santa Fe, NM, have successfully made art and culture important tourist draws. BCCC members believe Bozeman can do the same. "We need to convey the many reasons to participate in a vibrant cultural center that's unique in the West," says Sachatello-Sawyer.

BCCC members are confident that as cultural tourism builds, businesses and the arts will both thrive – and the community will benefit from enhanced cultural opportunities and the influx of revenue. "Cultural activities are the things that will brings us together in the 21st century," says Sachatello-Sawyer.

– Kristi Niemeyer

The Power of Cultural Tourism Investment

Cultural tourism is the largest growth sector in the tourism industry, nationally. Research shows cultural tourists spend more and stay longer than the average tourist. In addition, many tourists want memories of their trips to Big Sky Country, and arts purchases are a great way to take those memories home.

Montana Arts Council's Connection

MAC invests its grant funding in arts groups that attract 17% of their audience from out-of-state visitors. MAC partners with Travel Montana, the Montana Historical Society and Lee Enterprises to produce the Cultural Treasures Gallery and Museum Guide and provides support for statewide cultural tourism workshops.

Hard-Working Partners

Drummers celebrate community with creations

On a gray March day with a raw wind whipping their already roughened cheeks and hands, the ranch folk of Bynum gathered with children and townspeople outside the school to sear their brands into West African drums, built with their children's own small hands.

What they realized as they gathered around the warmth of the branding pot, however, was that their children had not only built 12 cedar-wood, goat-skin Ashiko drums that will echo in the four-room country school for decades to come, they had also built a sense of community that stretched from generation to generation and melded all those who supported the school project into one unified group, celebrating the past, the present and the future.

"It was a real community spirit," Bynum Elementary School teacher Katie Vandolah said after the three-day workshop concluded. "There was a real sense of pride."

What was so empowering, she added, was the turnout for the branding. Parents, grandparents, younger brothers and sisters all came to watch the families that had helped finance the workshop burn their brands into the drums, labeling them for the future with symbols of ranch history.

Drum maker Nathan Zavalney leads workshop in Bynum.
(Photo by Melody Martinsen, *Choteau Acantha*)

> "It was a real community spirit ... There was a real sense of pride."
>
> – *Katie Vendolah, elementary school teacher*

The drum workshop was part of a residency, "Community Building through Hand Drumming," with the Drum Brothers, a percussion ensemble from Arlee. It was sponsored by the Choteau Performing Arts League, and included workshops and performances throughout Teton County.

Nick Ostle, Bynum's only eighth grader, said after the workshop, "I think it's kind of cool because I have a brand on one of those drums that our family sponsored. It's going to be in the school for a long time. Bynum is where I grew up and where I've gone to school since kindergarten. It's going to be really important."

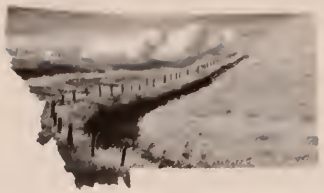
– Melody Martinsen, Choteau Acantha Editor

Montana Arts Council's Investment

The Montana Arts Council provides partial funding for the Drum Brothers' programs through a statewide performing arts consortium. This consortium hosts an annual conference where artists showcase their performances and organizations book tour dates. The Montana Arts Council helps support the performing arts seasons in those rural communities that bring groups such as the Drum Brothers to town.

Return on Investment

Performing artists, such as the Drum Brothers, obtain additional booking dates each year through this conference, and communities like Choteau benefit from their remarkable and innovative efforts to reach children and involve the community. The Performing Arts League is a national model for its innovative community and artist involvement – and the creative ways this benefits school children. Events draw audiences of 250-350 in this town of 1,800.



Hard-Working Partners

Montana Ambassadors pitch in for the arts

For the first time in 2001, the Montana Ambassadors hosted Hometown Celebrations for recipients of the Governor's Arts Awards.

In previous years, the recipients were honored in Helena with an awards ceremony and reception. While recipients are still honored in the Capitol City with a ceremony during the legislative session, the Hometown Celebrations give communities a more direct opportunity to honor their arts pioneers.

Governor's Arts Awards recipients Larry D. Williams and Judy Ericksen

"Helping out with Hometown Celebrations is a good way for us to serve our communities," says Ambassador Toni Broadbent of Helena, who runs Allegra Print & Imaging. "It's a perfect partnership for us."

The Montana Ambassadors is a volunteer organization of business leaders and educators with a shared dedication to doing business in Montana and furthering the best interests of the state. Its members serve at the pleasure of the governor and represent that office and the state in business and economic matters. The organization celebrates its 20th anniversary this year after being started by then-Governor Ted Schwinden in 1984.

In 2001, Governor's Arts Awards recipients were feted with parties in Choteau, Hamilton, Helena, Missoula and Pablo. In 2003, the Montana Ambassadors hosted celebrations in Billings, Great Falls and Miles City.

"We can facilitate these celebrations because we have ambassadors all over the state," says Broadbent. In addition to organizing the local events, the organization also provides some financial support.

> "Helping out with Hometown Celebrations is a good way for us to serve our communities. It's a perfect partnership for us."
> *– Montana Ambassador Toni Broadbent*

The Montana Arts Council also tapped the ambassadors for help with its statewide Listening Tours. The new project is aimed at helping the state agency better understand the interests and priorities of legislators. Ambassadors were provided with basic questions, and asked to contact legislators in their districts prior to the 2005 session.

By teaming up with the arts council, the ambassadors have learned more about the value of the arts in their communities.

At the same time, the arts council has welcomed the involvement of the statewide organization, which has helped provide more exposure for the arts, the governor and arts awards recipients throughout Montana.

Montana Arts Council's Connection

The Montana Governor's Arts Awards pay homage to the value of individual artists and the arts in Montana. The program is sponsored by the Montana Arts Council. Awards are made to individuals or organizations who have provided significant service in the arts to the state or whose artistic accomplishments are extraordinary. A complete list of winners is available at http://art.mt.gov.

Best Little Towns in the West

Troy: A tiny town with a large appetite for the arts

Troy, a tiny town in northwestern Montana, boasts an extra-large appetite for the arts.

Artrain USA has pulled through twice with its load of art from the Smithsonian, and the Northwest Montana Hot Club offers a stage for musicians from around the country to perform and a friendly gathering place for local quilters, book enthusiasts and the Ukulele Club.

Artrain USA first rolled through town in June 1998. The visit was so successful, the community decided to bring it back again in May 2002, reports Jennifer Seifert, a member of both the Troy Arts Council and the Montana Arts Council. "Ninety percent of our volunteers jumped at the chance to do it again," she says.

A multitude of volunteers was recruited from the community for various Artrain USA responsibilities, including guiding visitors through the train, organizing tours for students from more than 10 schools around the region, and coordinating financial responsibilities, promotion and advertising, security, artist demonstrations and an art and crafts show.

Northwest Music Hot Club

How does a town, population 1,100, pull it off? "We may be small but we have some energetic and spirited folks here with regards to the arts," says organizer Sherry Lershak of the Troy Fine Arts Council.

> "We may be small but we have some energetic and spirited folks here with regards to the arts."
>
> – *Sherry Lershak, Troy Fine Arts Council*

That commitment to the arts is also reflected year-around at the Northwest Music Hot Club. The modest building on Main Street serves coffee, soup, desserts and first-rate music.

Proprietor and professional musician Frank Chiaverini originally opened the Hot Club as an expansion of his music store and recording studio. With an ear for acoustics and his touring expertise, he put together a stage and sound and light setup that draws musicians from around the state and nation. And the club's warm, friendly ambiance has transformed it into a community center.

Two years ago, when the club was on the verge of closing its doors, employees organized a community meeting. More than 50 people showed up and formed the Friends of the Hot Club. Membership dues are $15 a month and, to date, the organization has more than 100 members. "It's kept this place going," says Chiaverini.

– *Kristi Niemeyer*

Montana Arts Council's Investment

The Montana Arts Council invests public dollars for the Smithsonian Artrain USA project, matched by local and federal funding, through its Opportunity Grant program.

Return of Investment

Artrain USA is a major cultural tourism draw, attracting 6,000 people from northwestern and western Montana, Idaho and Canada. The Hot Club is the hottest spot in northwestern Montana on Friday nights, and it makes Troy a hot spot for a great time and great music every single weekend.

Best Little Towns in the West

The Lewings promote Polson's community theatre

As proprietors of the Port Polson Players for more than two decades, Karen and Neal Lewing have done it all: directing, producing, writing, stage design and construction, bookkeeping, choreography, scoring and performing. "And we sweep up, too," says Neal, who's also a member of the Montana Arts Council.

Each brought ample experience to the theatre, located in the scenic community on the shores of Flathead Lake. They had worked at Fort Peck Summer Theatre, been part of Port Polson's summer season and toured with Missoula Children's Theatre before purchasing the Polson company in 1983.

John Mercer, Alicia Bullock-Muth, Joyce Shima and Neal Lewing starred in John Mercer's original play, "Who Gets the Lake Place?"

Over the course of the past 20 years, they toured their productions to three states, and launched Old Prison Players in Deer Lodge. "We were staging 24 shows a year at one time," Lewing says. "We did whatever we could to get our name out there and be ambassadors for Polson and ambassadors for the arts."

> "[Brueggeman] says those presentation skills learned in the theatre helped his political career"
>
> – *Neal Lewing*

Since the Polson schools have no drama program, the players contract with the schools for children's theatre productions and high school plays. "Now, we have kids of kids in our shows," says Lewing. Often, those young thespians are successful in academics, music and sports. "I like to think exposure to the performing arts was instrumental in their development," Lewing adds.

One example is John Brueggeman, who was recently elected to the state Senate after serving two terms in the House of Representatives. In his second session, at age 23, Brueggeman was named majority whip, making him the youngest member of legislative leadership of any legislature or state assembly in the United States.

As a youngster, Brueggeman was a regular in Port Polson shows. "He says those presentation skills learned in the theatre helped his political career," says Lewing.

Other local politicians have also taken turns on the Polson stage. Attorney John Mercer, former House Speaker who is currently chairman of the state Board of Regents, starred as Curly in *Oklahoma.* He also collaborated with Lewing on writing three original plays. Former state Senator Mike Taylor has also appeared in several shows.

"We call our program 'the great equalizer,'" says Lewing. "Whether they are bank presidents, lawyers, unemployed plumbers, or the chief of police – everybody's the same when they walk through the door."

– *Kristi Niemeyer*

Public Value

The Montana Arts Council conducted a study of arts participation attitudes of the general public of Montana in 2002 through a 1000-member public opinion poll, funded by the Wallace Foundation. People were asked how importantly they value arts and culture as to the quality of life in their community. Close to six of every ten Montanans ranked it as important to very important. The only leisure activity Montanans participate in more widely than the arts are outdoor recreation and church. In fact, more Montanans participate in the arts than in sports. Port Polson Players is a good example of just why.

Best Little Towns in the West

Colstrip stands behind its history and art center

More than 15 years ago, an intrepid member of the Rosebud County Historical Society walked door-to-door in Colstrip, manila envelope in hand. By the end of the day, she had recruited 200 members at $25 apiece. That first fundraiser helped transform the town's original schoolhouse (built in 1926) into the Schoolhouse History and Art Center (SHAC), which opened in 1996.

The tradition of community support continued in 1998, when Colstrip became an incorporated town. The fledgling city's proposed budget included an annual appropriation of 52 cents per $50,000 house for the art center.

But first, before signing the budget into law, the city surveyed residents. More than 80 percent approved of the 52-cent levy. "That showed a tremendous amount of support," says director Sue Neiman.

Prior to 1998, Colstrip was a company-owned town. It was born as a rough and ready coal camp, and eventually became the property of the now-defunct Montana Power Company, which built and ran four massive, coal-fueled power plants.

Schoolhouse History and Art Center

Residents, says Neiman, "have seen businesses come and businesses go." They seem to appreciate SHAC – both as a reflection of the community and as a repository of its history. "They like to support something that's stable, and will always be here."

An active education program, run by Carol Oberth, reaches students and senior citizens in Colstrip, Forsyth, Lame Deer and Birney. Exhibits that touch upon community interests have also helped bring new faces to the door. Last November, motorcycles were parked in the gallery during a display of hot-rod photos by Jeffrey Conger. "People from the plant stopped by on their lunch hour to see it," says Neiman.

Last summer, works by Colstrip graduate J.B. King appealed to locals and King's family and friends from the Cheyenne Reservation; the next show, "Culture and the Cowboy," with works by area rancher Clint McRae, brought "tons of people" to the center.

"Motorcycles, Native Americans, cowboys and mining – it's totally the area we serve," says Neiman. "That gets everyone in here, and after one visit, they come back."

– Kristi Niemeyer

> Colstrip residents "have seen businesses come and businesses go. They like to support something that's stable, and will always be here."
>
> *– Sue Neiman, Director, Schoolhouse History and Art Center*

Montana Arts Council's Investment

During the mid-1990s, MAC invested in a three-year salary assistance program to establish an executive director position at SHAC. MAC also helps SHAC to better afford touring art exhibits by supporting the Montana Art Gallery Director's Association touring exhibit program.

Return on Investment

SHAC Inc. was able to maintain local support to continue a paid executive director position beyond MAC's funding period, and is one of the most successful of the rural arts organizations that participated in that salary assistance program. Residents of the Colstrip area are able to see traveling art exhibits that would not normally reach rural communities.

Best Little Towns in the West

Murals reflect Cut Bank's colorful history

Cut Bank can claim a colorful history, from Lewis and Clark's adventures there two centuries ago, to an oil boom in the early 1900s and its rich agricultural roots. The small Hi-Line town is gradually exploring these themes on the walls of its downtown buildings.

A mural project, launched in 2000 by the nonprofit Cut Bank Revitalization Committee, has colored concrete and brick surfaces with artists' visions of the past. "It has definitely brightened up some buildings and gives us something to talk about other than the weather," says committee member Debbie Meiwald.

Mural by Gary Kerby (Photo by Jodie Hickey, courtesy of *Western Breeze*)

Wilsall artist Gary Kerby, a veteran of mural projects throughout the nation (including Exeter, CA, and Toppenish, WA), created Cut Bank's first mural, "Lewis and Clark Meet the Blackfeet," in 2000. In 2003, he depicted Lewis surveying Camp Disappointment.

In 2001, Hamilton artist Tim Joyner portrayed the era from the 1920s through the 1940s in "When Oil Was King"; and in 2002, Barbara Mitchell, who lives near Billings, created a mural depicting an old-fashioned branding. Mitchell also completed the most recent painting, an image of Captain Lewis fleeing from the Blackfeet. Student artists have added to the mix too, rendering the silhouette of a cowboy and lariat.

Future projects include images of agriculture and a patriotic piece titled "Spirit of America."

> "It has definitely brightened up some buildings and gives us something to talk about other than the weather."
>
> – *Debbie Meiwald, Cut Bank Revitalization Committee*

Each mural has cost $5,000-$6,000 and so far the committee has invested more than $30,000 on the project. With the exception of a partial grant for the most recent mural, they've relied mostly on private donations and community fundraisers.

"Tourists love them," Meiwald says of the murals. The committee plans to promote them with a map available at the visitors' center.

Locals also seem to enjoy the large-scale tributes to their history and heritage. "We want them to be as interesting and as historically accurate as possible," says Meiwald. "It's the parents, grandparents and great-grandparents of people who live here whose lives are reflected here," she adds.

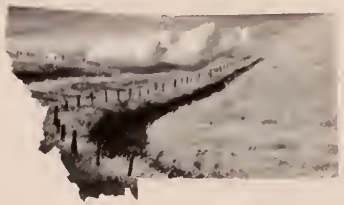
– *Kristi Niemeyer*

Public Value of Murals

Many communities throughout Montana are now funding mural projects to celebrate their heritage and promote community pride in their hometown. These murals help people develop a better understanding of the history of the area and bring that history to life.

Montana Arts Council's Connection

Although MAC has not funded this mural, it has provided partial funding for mural projects in Butte, Helena, Hamilton and Eureka. Additionally, schools throughout the state have created student murals through help from the Montana Arts Council's Artists in Schools and Communities program.



MONTANA'S CREATIVE MINDS

Artists residencies make learning magic

Helping kids feel important

"A student who refused to complete most of her work, answer any questions or do any homework, came alive during poetry. She wrote two poems for every class assignment and is still bringing in poems for me to read. Poetry has shown her how to be a successful student and she will now pass seventh grade."

– A teacher, following a residency with poet Marnie Prange

"It was a unique experience for the students to create their own sculptural piece and then to have that be a part of the larger piece. They seemed to be very impressed and proud of the final project. 'Wow that looks cool!' 'Those turned out neat!' 'Is my piece in this box?' The entire process of being part of the whole was powerful, they enjoyed having their individuality and being part of something bigger."

– Bozeman artist Beth Kennedy after a mural-making residency

"One of my favorite outcomes was the story of a sixth grader who suffered a brain injury last year and had lost interest in life and his sense of humor. Poetry proved a boon for him with its non-linear expressions. His mother thanked me and said he was writing three to four poems every night."

– From a teacher's aide and the artist after a middle-school poetry residency

"The Photography Project has opened a door of experience for many of our students ... Having David Spear as their teacher has made the experience even more valuable because he has touched everyone in a positive manner by opening the doors of photography to all of us. Before the project started, our students did not want to have their pictures taken or be on videotape. Now, I do not see them shying away from either, which indicates that our student's self-esteem has grown by leaps and bounds."

– Clarice King, Principal/Superintendent, Two Eagle River School, Pablo

"What benefited my students the most was the chance to work with artists ... people besides me. Also, how exciting the lessons were and how important and like artists you made them feel. ... Art expands creativity and teaches things in a different way."

– Third-grade teacher after a visual art residency

The Montana Arts Council's Arts Education program provides participatory experiences in arts learning that increase or strengthen participants' knowledge and skills in the arts. One of the most popular choices of schools is the artist-in-residency program, which pairs students and an artist, who works with the teacher to help them focus in on a special part of their curriculum. The subject may be in the arts, or the experience may use the arts to help teach other subjects. The program helps schools meet the State Arts Standards with results, as seen here, that go far beyond mastering a test.

Montana's Creative Minds

Integrating new skills

"Children researched migratory birds, then created a ceramic tile depicting their bird. The tiles traveled to the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge's annual celebration of migratory birds, Migration Mania, and later were installed as splash boards behind the new middle school's water fountains."

– A parent describing a long-term ceramic residency in Corvallis

"Some teachers expressed student retention of academic ideas was much better when presented in a theatrical way, and that students were consistently enthused when working with theatre in the classroom. ... Stronger associative skills, willingness to take risks, better physical and vocal projection, and more confidence were traits exhibited by many students involved."

– An artist/mentor after a special project where teachers were mentored on the basic skills and knowledge of theatre and how to integrate it with other subjects

"I would like to thank the Montana Arts Council for all of its support for the last four years. The school is now funding its own music and art programs. Because of MAC's assistance, the students, teachers, school board and parents see how important art instruction is to the full education of their children."

– Parent and teacher Betsy Wise, Springhill School, Bozeman

Children become stratus clouds during a Montana Transport Company residency.

Everyone can shine

"I fondly remember a class of third and fourth graders, full of children with learning disabilities. They all responded well to the structure and challenge of creating a puppet play from a folk tale. ... Even the shy ones shone and the rambunctious ones found control as they worked together in creating and presenting a puppet play."

– Peggy Meinholtz, My Pal Peggy Puppets

"Teachers were amazed at how they saw students who do not excel at other areas of academic work really shine during art class."

– A parent, following a visual art residency

MONTANA'S CREATIVE MINDS

Custer County Art and Heritage Center spreads art

Art is flourishing on the sparsely settled plains of eastern Montana, thanks to the educational outreach of the Custer County Art and Heritage Center in Miles City.

Nestled underground, in two holding tanks built in 1910 and 1924, the art center is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and earned a Governor's Historic Preservation Award and a Governor's Award for the Arts. With more than 7,000 square feet of exhibition and workspace, the facility is a hub for the arts within a 100-mile radius of Miles City.

Sue Tirrell helps students build a tipi kiln.

Assistant director and ceramic sculptor Sue Tirrell heads the art center's education program. She annually visits almost 30 schools in a nine-county region, many of them just specks on the map: Nashua and Jordan to the north, Alzada to the south, Busby and Ashland to the west and the Northern Cheyenne Reservation to the east.

Whether the schools have a few students or a few hundred, Tirrell is always welcome. "The small schools are especially great," she says. "Those kids are hungry for new things and new ideas. They just jump in and are really excited about working with the material and doing stuff they've never done before."

Given her background, Tirrell emphasizes ceramics in her traveling workshops. She has a portable raku-firing kiln and many areas have natural clay deposits.

She initiated a project with the Kinsey school where students dug local clay and made small, hand-built pots. In Broadus, Tirrell helped students construct an Australian tipi kiln with a coffee can as the chimney.

As students make a form, fire it, decorate and glaze it and fire it again, they learn about math, chemistry and the history of primitive cultures. "For teachers, it really crosses the curriculum."

And for rural teachers, who often teach all subjects to several grade levels, Tirrell's workshops also "breathe a little life into what they do with art."

"Students are often so isolated in the school environment," she adds. "Teachers say the residency brings the world to them and them out to the world."

– Kristi Niemeyer

> "Students are often so isolated in the school environment. Teachers say the residency brings the world to them and them out to the world."
>
> *– Sue Tirrell, Assistant Director, Custer County Art and Heritage Center*

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL'S INVESTMENT

The Montana Arts Council developed a new partnership with the center to help its arts education staff expand its reach into more eastern Montana schools. In addition, MAC invests public dollars in the center through its Organizational Excellence program. The center is also a recipient of a prestigious Building Arts Participation grant from the Montana Arts Council and the Wallace Foundation.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The center provides rural school teachers with invaluable curriculum assistance, since many of these schools in rural eastern Montana have one teacher teaching more than one grade. Through the efforts of the center, the schools are better able to meet the state standards for arts education.

Montana's Creative Minds

Butte children's theatre wins national award

The little Orphan Girl, tucked like hidden treasure in the basement of Butte's Mother Lode Theatre, took a bow at the nation's capitol Nov. 5, 2003.

The Orphan Girl Theatre and its parent organization, Butte Center for the Performing Arts, were among 18 nonprofit organizations in the United States and Mexico to receive Coming Up Taller Awards from the National Endowment for the Arts. The prestigious honor recognizes outstanding community arts and humanities programs that celebrate and foster the creativity of children.

First Lady Laura Bush presented the $10,000 awards during a special ceremony in the East Room of the White House. The Orphan Girl Theatre was one of five recipients to receive special recognition from the First Lady.

According to Helen "Gus" Miller, president of the Butte Center for the Performing Arts, this marks the Orphan Girl Theatre's third attempt at winning a Coming Up Taller Award – and the first time a Montana organization has received the award. The theatre was a semi-finalist in both previous attempts.

Left to right: Robert Poore and Micaela Newman receive Coming Up Taller Award from First Lady Laura Bush and NEA Chairman Dana Gioia.

The Orphan Girl Theatre, with an annual operating budget of approximately $100,000, every year introduces around 500 children ages 5-18 to theatre arts. "We stuck out like a sore thumb for openers because we're so small," says Miller. "And who thinks small?"

While Miller attributes the successful grant application to several factors, the main component was an innovative program that encouraged children to create original melodramas based on Butte history. The melodramas were performed for civic organizations, in the courthouse rotunda, and throughout the summer at the World Museum of Mining.

> "And who thinks small?"
> *– Gus Miller, President, Butte Center for the Performing Arts*

Micaela Newman, who was chosen by her peers to attend the awards ceremony, says the experience taught her "more about Butte's history than I've learned in school."

Her favorite aspect of the Orphan Girl Theatre is its embracing nature. "It lets everyone, regardless of talent, become part of the theatre 'family,'" she says. "Even children who don't want to be on stage can run the lights and sound, stage manage, make costumes, find props or direct a production. The theatre shares its magic with anyone interested in and open to its life-altering influence."

– Kristi Niemeyer

Montana Arts Council's Investment

The Montana Arts Council invests public dollars in the Butte Center for the Performing Arts through its Organizational Excellence program to help support a portion of the day-to-day operating costs.

Return on Investment

The Butte Center for the Performing Arts beautifully renovated the downtown theatre, making it a showplace for downtown. This is a highly successful theatre attracting large audiences for its mainstage events and its children's programming. It contributes to downtown revitalization and cultural tourism in Butte and is a treasured resource for after-school children's programming.

MONTANA'S CREATIVE MINDS

Finding expression and gaining skills through art

The arts are helping developmentally disabled and mentally ill people feel more at home in two Montana communities. In Big Sandy, Tumbleweed Gallery serves art and espresso to locals and passers-by on Highway 87, while showcasing artwork and baked goods made by developmentally disabled clients of Big Sandy Activities, Inc.

And in Helena, Jane Manley has forged a unique partnership with Golden Triangle Mental Health Services. Her gallery, Crazy Woman Beading, is also a vocational rehab site, providing training in beadwork and a place to sell art for clients with disabling mental illnesses.

"It doesn't matter what kind of disability you have. Food and shelter aren't the only needs," says Jean Denning, director of Big Sandy Activities. "We all have a need for creative expression, to give back to the community, to feel needed and valued – those are the things we're working on here."

Big Sandy Activities serves 21 clients and oversees two group homes and the Sheltered Workshop, where developmentally disabled people make baked goods and a variety of crafts.

"It's very difficult to find work opportunities for people with disabilities," says Denning. "We wanted a place where they could work and sell their art and crafts. We also wanted to do something for our community and the local economy."

"The town is now seeing the value – both to the economy and in other ways – that the arts can have for small, rural farming and ranching communities."

– Jean Denning, Director, Big Sandy Activities

"The town is now seeing the value – both to the economy and in other ways – that the arts can have for small, rural farming and ranching communities," Denning says.

Big Sandy artist Nick Fry

In Helena, long-time beadworker Jane Manley offered to teach beading to mental health clients. In addition to the therapeutic value of beadwork, Manley saw an opportunity for people with mental illness to develop a skill, sell their work, and socialize with others.

At Crazy Woman Beading and the Montana Art Circle, adjacent storefronts on Last Chance Gulch, clients learn to make jewelry, using quality designs, semi-precious stones and beads. "They can be creative, earn a little extra money and develop a sense of community."

The beading circles have also helped integrate people with mental illness into the community. "They learn to start up conversations around beading," she says. "The ice breaker is your art. It gives you something to talk about."

– Kristi Niemeyer

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL'S CONNECTION

The Tumbleweed Gallery and Crazy Woman Beading are dynamic arts businesses that meet an important need in their communities. Although the Montana Arts Council does not provide financial support for these two businesses, it ensures that all of its own programs are compliant with the Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA).

In addition, the Montana Arts Council provides a service to all of its major grantees to provide assistance in ensuring their facilities and their programming meet the 504-ADA requirements. It does so through on-site visits and technical assistance to ensure that all state-funded programs are available for all Montanans.

Montana's Creative Minds

Spending milk money on painting lessons

Lee Rostad grew up in the tiny town of Roundup, the daughter of a miner. She graduated from The University of Montana, and studied in London for a year as a Fulbright scholar before moving with her husband, Phil, to the Rostad family ranch near Martinsdale. She has since served on the Montana Committee for the Humanities, the Charles M. Bair Family Trust Board and the Montana Historical Society. She received a Governor's Award for the Humanities in 2001.

In addition to her work as a historian and arts advocate, she's been a potter ("I kicked the chickens out of the coop and made a pottery of the chicken house," she says) and a painter. She's also an accomplished author, whose most recent book is titled *Grace Stone Coates, Her Life in Letters.*

She shared her own personal story with the arts council:

"In my early thirties, I found myself married and living on a ranch 30 miles from the nearest town. There was no telephone and no TV.

"I was cooking for the ranch crew – three big meals a day, baking a dozen loaves of bread each week, churning my own butter, having a big garden and caring for the chickens. We were raising two small boys and caring for a mother-in-law who had been diagnosed with leukemia.

Lee Rostad

"Another one of my chores was to wash the milk separator, but that had some rewards, because the extra cream that was sold was my cash to spend. And one spring I decided to spend some money on learning to paint.

"For a couple of months, I drove 90 miles to Helena for painting lessons and my vision opened up. Things were brighter. I learned to see and appreciate more of the world around me. Then, my husband spent his Korean veteran's bonus money on an oil painting and we began the collection that surrounds us in our home and brings us great enjoyment.

"What happened to us to make our lives more meaningful happens every day all over this great state, largely due to the efforts of the Montana Arts Council and the Montana Committee for the Humanities.

"In our county of Meagher, people come in from the hayfields in August for Shakespeare in the Parks. During the year, the local arts council brings us live theatre, music and dance. Art is so much a part of the history of this state and it helps bring people together to appreciate their time in place and history ..."

> "Art is so much a part of the history of this state and it helps bring people together to appreciate their time in place and history ... "
>
> – *Lee Rostad, rancher, historian and author*

Montana Arts Council's Investment

The Montana Arts Council provides financial assistance to many of Montana's major arts organizations, which in turn provide educational training classes and programs for adults and children throughout the state. The Montana Arts Council provides seed funding to these groups for operating support to specifically fund arts education.

Return on Investment

Nonprofit arts organizations throughout the state provide enormous educational return on investment because of the many workshops and educational outreach services they provide. Nonprofit arts organizations operate as educational institutions, since they are accorded their nonprofit 501(c)(3) status because of the educational public service they provide.

COMMUNITY TRAILBLAZERS

Missoula Children's Theatre: A fairytale comes true

Jim Caron, executive director of Missoula Children's Theatre, has germinated the seed of children's theatre into a beanstalk of giant proportions: MCT has a budget of $4.5 million, with 30 teams of actors reaching 55,000 children in all 50 states, Canada, Europe, South America, Asia and the Persian Gulf. The company transformed an old school into a lovely new theatre and headquarters, completed in 1998, that also houses a community theatre and provides a venue for other productions.

Missoula Children's Theatre puts 55,000 children on stage around the world every year.

But success was by no means guaranteed. Caron credits the Montana Arts Council with helping MCT evolve as a nonprofit organization. "We had no clue about business," says Caron. "... In those early days, we would have floundered without the solidity that the arts council provided."

Grants were also crucial. In 1974, the organization's annual budget was $28,000, so a $5,000 grant from the arts council had a sizeable impact. "We couldn't have survived without it," he says.

Thanks to its touring program, MCT has developed a unique financial profile. Most nonprofits gain 50 percent of their revenue from earned income and 50 percent from unearned income (grants, fundraising). In contrast, 90 percent of MCT's revenue is earned income, generated by the international tour.

Of its $4.5 million budget, 80 percent comes from out of state, and 80 percent is spent in Montana, making a sizeable contribution to the local economy. MCT has also become a major tourist attraction. "Obviously, the key to tourism is the outdoors," says Caron. "But still the sun goes down, and then the artists take over."

Of its $4.5 million budget, 80 percent comes from out of state, and 80 percent is spent in Montana, making a sizeable contribution to the local economy.

Over the years, MCT's actors have been described as "infantrymen for the arts." According to Caron, the military analogy works. "We do have to fight our way into people's hearts," he says. "When we pull up in our little red truck to a first-time town, we never know what to expect."

"The good news is that 95-97 percent have us back."

More good news is that of the 5,000 actors that MCT interviews across the country each year, "a good 10 percent got their first theatre experience in an MCT show," says Caron. "I guess they see it as sort of payback time."

– Kristi Niemeyer

MAC's Long-Term Investment

The Montana Arts Council began its support for MCT while in its infancy in 1974 through pivotal grant investments, complemented by valuable nonprofit business advice. This helped the company get launched and on the road to success. Throughout the years, the Montana Arts Council and Montana's Cultural Trust continued to support the Montana tour and helped renovate the company's headquarters.

Return on Investment

MCT, Inc.'s budget has grown to over $4.5M in annual operations and 133 year-round staff. Nearly 80% of MCT's revenues are derived from out-of-state performance residencies, while 80% of those revenues are spent in state. This is arts-driven economic development at its finest in Montana.

Community Trailblazers

Arts are integral to vital, multi-faceted economy

Billings Mayor Chuck Tooley offered the following comments during the Montana Arts Council's arts-driven economic development meeting in 2002:

"... Though we value the past, we are not tied to outmoded ways of doing business. As we anticipate the new economy, we want to offer appealing lifestyles for residents and for people who might consider moving here. If you think about what contributes to a lifestyle, it might include a well-run city with great people, good schools and public services, of course. But it would also include lots of choices of things to do, good community support for a variety of activities, including nonprofit cultural organizations.

Billings Mayor Chuck Tooley

"Quality of life or lifestyle choice is an end in itself. But community leaders must understand that in order for us to be successful in the new economy, we must appeal to those who are in it. Let me explain.

"Unlike generations of American workers before them, today's workers are choosing where to live and work based heavily on lifestyle considerations. It's not just about where the job is. It's more about where the LIFE they want to live is. It used to be that workers followed companies. Now it's the location of the workers that drives the location of industry in the new economy ...

"These workers value social and cultural amenities like symphony, opera, theatre and professional sports as well as more casual, open, inclusive, and participative activities, like rowing and cycling and outdoor cafes. Montana cities and towns have many of the offerings it would take to attract and keep these new workers ...

"In example after example we can demonstrate that the arts are not a frill, not frosting on a cake, but instead are integral to a vital economy. The arts are both an industry with their own economic impact and amenities that are important in attracting businesses to the state. Montana can offer the quality of life people are looking for, and the arts only enhance that quality of life."

> "The arts are both an industry with their own economic impact and amenities that are important in attracting businesses to the state."
> – *Billings Mayor Chuck Tooley*

Montana Arts Council's Connection

The Montana Arts Council invests in many Billings arts organizations that play a large role in its downtown revitalization.

Return on Investment

The Billings Cultural Partners commissioned an economic impact study in 1999 that documented 400 arts and culture jobs that helped generate $6.7 million in resident income that year. Cultural attendees spent $2.2 million on meals and $500,000 on lodging. Non-profit arts organizations throughout the state had an $85 million economic impact on the state's economy, based on a study conducted in 2002.

The Arts Mean Business!!

COMMUNITY TRAILBLAZERS

Mother, daughter seek to save arts program

Sometimes painting or making pottery can teach students more than fractions or the Dewey decimal system.

Livingston resident Melanie Nashen thinks so, which is why she tried to persuade Montana legislators to not cut funding for the Montana Arts Council which produces the artists-in-residency program.

Nashen, along with her nine-year-old daughter Keegan, spoke before the House Education Subcommittee in Helena just three days after the start of the 2003 legislature.

Nashen feared the program would be put into jeopardy because if state funding is cut, so too are federal matching dollars available for the program. "We need to focus more on the things that are good for a child's development," she said.

Art teaches children to think creatively and it encourages them to use their imaginations, Nashen said, which is not done easily in core subjects like math and science. "These residencies encourage children to be different, to think differently," she said.

Nashen's daughter Keegan, who attends Winans Elementary in Livingston, said she wanted to speak in front of legislators because she knows how valuable art is to herself and her peers.

Sample artwork from a residency in Livingston.

When asked what she had studied in math class Monday, Keegan mumbled "fractions, I think."

But her eyes lit up when she described working on a mural of the Yellowstone River, which students completed with the help of artist-in-residence Grayce Holzheimer. "It's really fun to do art like that," Keegan said of the 40-foot-long mural.

Keegan, who was a fourth grader when she testified before the Legislature, went on to describe art projects she had done in the second and third grades.

> "We need to focus more on the things that are good for a child's development."
> – *Melanie Nashen*

Nashen said about 40 percent of the district's students qualified for reduced-price meals because of low incomes, which might mean many of them don't have the money to spend on art. "The artists-in-residency program has really exposed kids to art who otherwise wouldn't have been," she said.

Nashen, a professional photographer, was excited by the medium as a child, but didn't take her first class until college. Now she wants to make sure her daughter, as well as students at other Livingston schools, get the chance that she didn't have. "I want to provide that opportunity for our kids," she said.

– Jason Lehmann, Reprinted courtesy of the Livingston Enterprise

THE INVESTMENT

The Montana Arts Council invests $80,000 per year in arts education programming throughout the state. It provides matching grants for schools and community groups to sponsor artists-in-residence in K-12 schools and special projects in arts education.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The Montana Arts Council's programs help schools meet the state standards in arts education, a very important aid for rural schools with no arts teachers. The Montana Arts Council reached one out of every five school children in the state in 2004. And, during the past three years, it served 54 of Montana's 56 counties.

COMMUNITY TRAILBLAZERS

Aaberg's music is steeped in Montana's landscape

"Philip Aaberg has clearly given attention to the influence of place in his music – his preference for chords with long intervals that linger hauntingly, evoking 'the long view' of the high prairie, his reliance on intricate variations of recurring notes, and his fondness for large and open sonic spaces where rhythms approach and recede like Hi-Line trains. His is music as organically Montana as the gurgling calls of canyon wrens."

– Michael Umphrey

Philip Aaberg

Philip Aaberg's Grammy-nominated CD, *Live From Montana,* was recorded on June 30, 2000, during an all-school reunion at the school auditorium in Chester. The CD is steeped in Montana references: George Winston, another pianist with Montana roots, wrote the liner notes; artwork by Missoula artist Monte Dolack adorns the cover; and the back of the jacket features the message that's posted on the front of Fort Benton High School: "Industry Is Useless Without Culture."

Chester remains home to this artist who has performed on concert stages around the world and shared stages with some of the world's most acclaimed musicians.

Aaberg was raised in a family of musicians. His mother and his uncle both played piano. At age four, Aaberg was already perched at the keyboard. And by the time he was in high school, he was boarding the train in Shelby four times a month for lessons in Spokane.

When he performed with the Spokane Symphony as a junior, "a whole trainload from Chester came out to hear me."

The isolation of his rural upbringing planted two qualities firmly in Aaberg's psyche: a sense of confidence and independence. Because of the small population base, kids in rural communities tend to participate in most school activities – like Aaberg, they might play basketball and baseball and belong to the school band. "So you grow up thinking there's not anything you can't do."

Aaberg stepped from his high-plains hometown to Harvard, and from there, onto concert stages throughout the world.

That perception no doubt helped Aaberg step from his high-plains hometown to Harvard, and from there, onto concert stages throughout the world.

He now lives in Chester with his wife Patricia and son Jake. "The thing I always remember when I walk down the streets of Chester, I'm seeing people who knew my grandfather," he says. As Wallace Stegner – one of Aaberg's favorite authors – pointed out: "When you stand up in that country, you're the center of the world."

– Kristi Niemeyer

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL'S INVESTMENT

The Montana Arts Council invests public dollars in Phil Aaberg's school residencies and concert series throughout the state in communities such as Chester, Fort Benton and Choteau.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Organizations that bring Phil Aaberg to their community have booming sales, not to mention an incredible performance. Children involved in his artist residencies work have an experience they will remember for a lifetime. Montanans are proud of Mr. Aaberg's national reputation and his generosity of spirit in giving so much back to the state. He was rewarded for his artistry with the prestigious Montana Governor's Arts Award in 1995.

LASTING LEGACY

Hi-Line veterinarian raised a pair of musicians

Raymond "Rib" Gustafson knows how to pull a calf, stitch up its mother and diagnose a sick horse. But according to two of his sons, Erik "Fingers" Ray and Wylie Gustafson, it was hearing their dad play folk and country tunes in the family living room that turned them into musicians.

"I always had a guitar and my wife played the piano," says the semi-retired veterinarian. "The kids used to dance and jig around like a bunch of banshees."

Like his own five children, Gustafson grew up in a musical household. His father moved from Minnesota to Rappelje, a small town west of Billings. "Every Sunday, there was a musical confab," Gustafson recalls.

He went to school at Montana State College (now Montana State University) in Bozeman, flew planes for the Navy during World War II, and then earned his degree in veterinary medicine in Colorado.

In 1951, he opened a veterinary practice in Conrad and he and his wife, Pat, settled on the Hi-Line to raise their family. Gustafson also found time to write five books, ranging from reflections on being a rural vet to stories about Lewis and Clark.

His son, Barr, now runs the veterinary practice and the family ranch on the Two Medicine River (with a frequent hand from Rib, who has the oldest veterinary license in the state). Son Sid is a vet in Bozeman and daughter Kristen Juras is an attorney in Great Falls.

Wylie Gustafson with father Rib Gustafson

Erik, a math teacher in Conrad, continues to play his blues-tinged tunes throughout the state. And Wylie, the youngest, heads the nationally known western band, Wylie and the Wild West.

Ridin' the Hi-Line, a CD Wylie recorded in 2000 on Rounder Records, was chock-full of original tunes about his upbringing – including an ode to his father, "He's a Cowboy."

Wylie is also renowned for his yodeling, having supplied the signature yodel for Yahoo! Inc. His father attributes that talent to the family's annual ski trips. "We'd get to the top of the mountain, let out a hell of a yodel and there we'd go," recalls Rib.

Although geographically spread out, the Gustafson family remains close-knit. Erik and his dad still play guitars together, "although I mostly like to listen," says Rib. "And the same songs Wylie plays on the national scene, I play for my little grandchildren."

– Kristi Niemeyer

> "I always had a guitar and my wife played the piano. The kids used to dance and jig around like a bunch of banshees."
> *– Veterinarian Rib Gustafson*

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL'S CONNECTION

The Montana Arts Council proudly promotes all brands of the arts – from the haunting tunes and signature yodels of Wylie Gustafson to country fiddling, blues, Celtic, jazz, symphony, rock and roll and all other forms of the arts. The Montana Arts Council has a Folklife program to help celebrate and preserve the proud traditional arts traditions in Montana, such as country western music. As in the Gustafson family, these arts are passed one-on-one from generation to generation. Montanans are proud of their roots and heritage, and the Montana Arts Council's folklife program helps ensure these art forms remain a legacy for future generations.

LASTING LEGACY

Fiddler connects children to their Métis roots

In Métis music, the fiddle drives the melody and tells the story of a people whose ancestors were early fur traders and Native Americans.

Métis descendants Jamie and Vince Fox, the children of Crystal and James Fox, live in the small Hi-Line town of Harlem. Jamie, 14, and her brother Vincent, 16, started playing fiddle when they were nine years old, and both have participated in the annual Montana Fiddle Camp.

Brother and sister Vince and Jamie Fox practice fiddle tunes. (Photo courtesy of Gabriel Dumont Institute)

With lots of parental support and help from the Montana Arts Council's Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program, the youngsters are discovering their rich Métis legacy through the music of their ancestors. Last spring, they spent a week near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, learning Métis fiddle tunes from renowned fidder John Arcand.

The children are descended from the Métis on their mother's side and Gros Ventre Indian on their father's side. "The fiddle is at the center of our Métis culture," they said in their apprenticeship application, "and it's rapidly dying."

Jamie and Vince applied for an apprenticeship with Arcand – considered the master of the Métis fiddle. They owned a few of his CDs and books, and were confident he could help them learn the fast, intricate fiddle style. "We do play some of our music Métis style – or try to," they said. "We know of no other children who play this style."

Arcand, who began playing fiddle at age six, learned his licks from his grandfather and father. He's composed more than 200 original compositions, and has recorded many of the old songs that he grew up hearing.

Arcand spent more than six hours a day, "going over the tunes they wanted to learn in slow motion – teaching them by ear and sheet music," he says. "They went home with 20 different fiddle tunes they had learned in a week. I was really pushing at them."

Arcand commends Montanans for "sending kids out here to learn about their culture and roots."

And for the young participants, the opportunity to study with a master gives them the hope "that someday, we will also become masters of Métis-style fiddle and be able to teach and preserve our culture."

– Kristi Niemeyer

> "We both hope that someday we will become masters of Métis-style fiddle and be able to teach and preserve our culture."
>
> *– Jamie and Vince Fox*

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL'S INVESTMENT

The Montana Arts Council's Folklife program sponsors the Traditional Arts Master/Apprentice program, designed to document, preserve and promote Montana's living heritages through the arts. This program funds a master artist to intensively teach an apprentice over an extended period of time and encourages members of groups and communities to preserve and continue their own cultural traditional heritages.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Through this program the Montana Arts Council has helped individuals preserve their Montana traditional arts of quilting, hardanger embroidery, quillwork, basket weaving, hide brain tanning, Indian beadwork, drum making, traditional hide painting, bit, spur and saddle making, cowboy poetry, sweat lodge songs, tipi painting, dulcimer music, Scottish highland pipes, boot making and many others.

LASTING LEGACY

Morgan's paintings entwine history and art

Artist Bob Morgan was raised in the Helena Valley. When he was five, his parents gave him a copy of Charlie Russell's illustrated letters, *Good Medicine*. "It was the book I learned to read from," recalls Morgan. He remembers his father telling him that Russell "was a good artist and he had a lot of common sense."

Morgan not only learned to read from Russell's book, he also began to copy the illustrations. His parents, he says, "always saw to it that I had something to draw on or paint with."

He also frequented the Montana Historical Society, poking through exhibits and examining paintings. Eventually, he became the society's exhibits designer and curator and remains its curator emeritus.

He's been a professional artist since 1972, and his work is part of private and public collections throughout the United States.

Robert F. Morgan

His paintings typically evoke the artist's fascination with history.

Sales of prints, derived from original Morgan paintings, have been used to raise funds for a host of Helena organizations, including local churches, the symphony, the Helena Police Protective Association and the American Legion.

He's also recreated local history in mural projects for the Ag Museum in Fort Benton, the bank in Anaconda and the Helena airport. "The art that survives is the art that depicts time and place," the artist believes. "That's why I think some of the things I do are worthwhile."

Tom Cook, head of public relations for the Montana Historical Society, has known Morgan for more than two decades. "He's a great example of how history and art are entwined," Cook said when Morgan received the Governor's Arts Award in 2001. "He's just a tremendous voice for the state. He lives, breathes and is Montana, really."

Art has remained a constant companion, a lifelong friend. "If you don't have that in your life, you're missing a lot," Morgan says. "An awful lot."

– Kristi Niemeyer

> "The art that survives is the art that depicts time and place ... That's why I think some of the things I do are worthwhile."
>
> *– Robert F. Morgan, artist and historian*

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL'S CONNECTION

The Montana Arts Council was proud to nominate Bob Morgan for a Montana Governor's Arts Award in 2001. Bob is one of Montana's most beloved western artists. He personifies the lasting legacy artists have in our society, through the substantial body of his work and the breadth it spans of Montana history. He also personifies the best of artists, with his generous-spirited citizenship and through his substantial contributions to so many civic-minded causes.

LASTING LEGACY

Handmade dolls preserve Crow traditions

Birdie Real Bird turned to the ancient art of dollmaking as a means of mourning her mother, who died in 1998. Lucy Real Bird, born in 1917 on the Crow Reservation, wore traditional attire – a calico cotton dress, long shawl, leather belt and high-top elk-skin moccasins. "It was the way she dressed every day," says Real Bird. "When she died, I thought, 'no one is going to dress that way any more. I have to preserve it.'"

Birdie Real Bird (Photo by Paul Dix)

First, she began to make moccasins the way her mother had made them. Eventually, "I decided to make a doll who dressed like my mother."

Crow Indians have made dolls for centuries, both as playthings for children and as objects in medicine bundles. Real Bird's dolls are about 15 inches tall, made of buckskin and stuffed with buffalo hair, gleaned from a reservation herd. Her women dolls wear buckskin dresses while the men are attired in wool broadcloth leggings and buckskin war shirts – typical of clothing they wore in the late 1800s.

> "I'm hopeful my dolls will be enough to let us know how they dressed back then."
>
> – *Birdie Real Bird, Crow artist*

Real Bird shapes the faces of her dolls with sinew, then uses a variety of beads for the eyes, mouth and hair. "When I start sewing beads in the buckskin, it's amazing what it reveals – I haven't made the same face yet," she says.

Two of Real Bird's dolls were purchased by the Smithsonian for the National Museum of the American Indian. She has shared her talents with students during school residency programs and her work is part of a touring exhibit of Crow and Northern Cheyenne dolls. In 2000, Real Bird was named a Folk and Traditional Arts Master Artist by the Montana Arts Council for passing on the tradition of making Crow leather belts.

Real Bird, who is a middle school counselor in Hardin, has participated in traditional crafts most of her life. Dollmaking, like her other pursuits, is a satisfying artistic endeavor. "It helped me through my mourning – through a lot of stress in my life," she says.

At the same time, she wants to leave a lasting legacy with her artwork: "I'm hopeful my dolls will be enough to let us know how they dressed back then."

– *Kristi Niemeyer*

Montana Arts Council's Investment

Birdie Real Bird received a Folk and Traditional Arts Master/Apprenticeship grant and is featured on the Montana Arts Council's website.

Return on Investment

Dr. James Bruggeman, principal, Irving School in Bozeman, described a dollmaking residency as, "magnificent ... I must emphasize that the residency itself was much more than just a series of art projects. Its focus on contemporary and historical Indian culture struck a positive chord in all of us." Patricia Ingraham, principal/superintendent of Ophir School in Gallatin Gateway, said, "This presentation was so much more valuable than reading about it from a book or watching a video."

Montana Arts Council

Bill Frazier, Chairman, Big Timber

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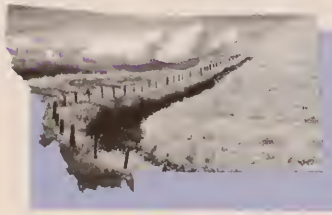

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